

Inu to Hasami wa Tsukaiyou Volume One Prologue

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Let's talk about books.

How many books can you read in a day?

Say, if you read for the entire twenty-four hours.

If you read one book an hour, twenty-four books every day, by the end of the year, you could have read up to eighty-seven thousand, six hundred books.

If you were to read all the books published in Japan in a single year, you would have approximately read eight hundred thousand books.

So if you can finish a book every six minutes, you can read up to two hundred and forty books every day. By the end of the year, you'll have read eight hundred seven thousand, six hundred books.

These figures unfortunately don't include old publications or publications outside Japan.

Yes, it's an impossible dream trying to read every book in the world.

It's simply not humanly possible.

More books are born into this world every day.

If there are people, there will be more new books.

It's not something humans can change anymore.

Books were made by humans, yet we have no control over them.

Of course, these are just assumptions.

To conquer all books is just a dream.

Maybe it's not even a dream either.

Neither is it as sweet as an illusion.

It's inappropriate to call this 'wishful thinking' too.

More like someone recklessly using a flimsy raft to venture into the ocean.

Or like someone stupidly trying to throw a rock onto the moon.

In this war, people write more new books.

Not just read, but they weave a story together.

The stories that don't get published are thrown into the pits of despair and that is a true portrayal of the no-end battle of books.

Novels, manga, encyclopaedias, new books, picture books, magazines, manuals, strategy guides, artbooks, short stories, poems and essays.

Text books, dictionaries, anthologies, recipe collections, reference books, medical guides, photo albums, biblical scriptures and navigation guides.

No end to books, a huge variety to chose from.

People only chose a couple of books from that huge variety.

It's not like they're picky or something, they simply just choose the ones they want to read.

They aren't discouraged when a certain book isn't what they're looking for.

It is very common for people to do so.

This story is about willpower.

To never give up in front of hardships and no matter what, be still able to smile, and still having their unwavering judgement.

Yes, this is about how to be proud of oneself and how to never succumb to this or that person's story.

"This is extremely exaggerated. Why so many profound thoughts? Enjoying books and their stories is the most important thing here."

"Hey, you're an author. Think about it a little more."

"Eh? When could an ordinary household pet even talk? Come here. You can decide whether it's your front or back, left or right paw. You choose."

"Do you want to poke me? Do you really want to poke me?"

This is a story that you'll die if you don't read.

A story about a person jammed between life and death.

"Stop! Don't poke me! I'm against animal abuse!"

"You're exaggerating again. I'm lightly prodding you. Besides, I'm pretty sure scissors are used for cutting, not poking things, right?"

"Then why are you poking me?"

"Oh, do you want me to cut you up instead? Oh, I see, then come here....."

"No way! Do you have nothing else to do apart from cutting or poking me?"

This is a story that I'll die if I don't write.

A story about a spirit jammed between dreams and reality.

"Ow, I really can't stand this! Since you've got so much time to do this, why can't you write another book instead? Everyone's waiting for it!"

"Geez, I'm having fun right now."

"You may be having fun, but I'm having the shock of my life! Okay okay, go and write. Aren't authors meant to write?"

"You don't understand a thing!"

Maybe you could say it's.....

Something stranger than reality,

Something even stranger than novels,

That is, this story.

Inu to Hasami wa Tsukaiyou Volume One Chapter One

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Hit, and a Dog Appears

July 31

That damned teacher, I pulled myself to school with great difficult today, only to have a bloody free period?

I complained in my thoughts as I looked out the window.

It was finally the summer holidays but apparently I needed extra classes. Somehow, I managed to force myself to come and there, waiting for me on the blackboard was 'something important suddenly came up, study whatever you want today'.

If that's the case, there's absolutely no point in studying! I don't know what a normal high school teacher would consider important, but I for one, also have something important to do! I have to read!

Free periods were fun but suddenly I had more free time than I imagined and I ended up finishing all of the books I had brought with me to pass time during summer class. I even finished the books I had planned to read on the train home and my emergency stack of books. Having said that, why do they have summer classes anyway? Though I'd say changing it to a free study period is one real tragedy.

Sigh, if I knew, I definitely would have gone to the library before coming here.

To be honest, I don't like buying books outside Occhan's place since he'll probably cry if he saw me at another bookshop. Yes, he may be a fully grown adult, but he will still cry.

Can't do anything about it, I'll just read the junk mail.

By the time I had finished reading the advertisements of the moving services, printing press and the gynaecology services, the train had already arrived at Shininaba station.

The moment the train door opened, I flew outside and rushed down the stairs. I ran through all the security checks, ignored the sign post and paid the train fare..... I didn't bother looking at the scenery, ran through yet more security checks and out the southern door of the station. I was gradually picking up speed, like the wind was on my back and by the time I had walked out the southern door, I was already running for Honda Bookshop.

I burst through automatic door and the familiar bell rang.

No one was at the counter, only a sign that read "Business All Good", which proves that Occhan is buying rubbish again. This shop was pretty much doomed since it started, since Occhan has no brains for business.

“Welcome, Harumi-kun.”

Honda Fumio, the person I usually called Occhan, came out from behind the shop. His face was friendly and one would feel relaxed at the sight of him, besides he suited the pink colour of his usual clothing. He heard the bell, but he was still way too slow coming out.

“This isn’t good, Occhan, you should be coming out immediately upon hearing the bell. If you continue to be like this, you’ll attract thieves sooner or later.”

Occhan stuck out his bottom lip and confidently replied.

“Don’t worry, no one here is bad.”

How could you say that? These days, people are just getting wilder. Never mind that, what would you do if it actually happened? I wouldn’t be able to buy books then, remember that.

“These are the only books today, what do you think of them?”

Occhan took out a couple of books, a selection of novels, manga and magazines, all of them published earlier today. Seeing the bright covers almost made me drool in delight. Yes, yes, that were good, that’s why this shop is the best. As expected of Occhan, he knows me too well.

“I want all of them.”

I had just gotten my paycheck and therefore, I had plenty of money to spare.

Occhan replied “yes” before opening the counter. While he was at it, I took another look around the bookshop. I was browsing through some of the titles when my sharp, hunter’s eyes darted towards something, perhaps my prey.

.....Oh, this book wasn’t bad. The title, ‘Hell Zousui’, suggests a story that not many people would like to buy, but I was a little curious, so I decided to buy it.

“Occhan, add this book.”

I held out a copy of ‘Hell Zousui’ to Occhan, only to realise that he was holding the same book.

“Sorry, I forgot this book. It’s written by a new author but it’s pretty interesting, I bet you’ll enjoy it.”

Occhan must be gloating over the fact that he was a step ahead of me, for he was smiling sweetly and innocently at me. Oh well, it’s good that he knows what his customers prefer to read.

“You can have this one for free. Have a read of it.”

As expected of Occhan, he really has no brain for business.

Who would give a book, which they spent some money buying, away for free? But I accepted it anyway, because I bet he will be criticised by his wife again. His wife is truly scary when she is angry and she resembles Amazon warriors when she is. She once knifed through a thick stack of magazines, which is something not many normal people can do.

Including ‘Hell Zousui’, I had bought a total of ten books.

I said goodbye to Occhan before leaving. Honda Bookshop was only ten minutes away from home, though it wasn’t very far, I still felt a little tired today.

Harumi Kazuhito is a bookworm.

I love books, I love them so much that you could say I’m one real book-loving idiot.

As a bookworm, not reading books makes me feel uncomfortable. As I had no book to read on

the train today, I realised that I had significantly read less than usual. At least I didn't live with my parents, so I live a pretty free life, as I can concentrate on reading at home.

What should I do? Read now? Which book should I read while walking today?

The angel in my heart tempted me with an evil smile. My Angel, this isn't your work right? Do I have no conscience to stop myself?

But time is precious, walking home would take ten minutes, during this time how many pages can I read, how many words will I read! 'Addiction' is perfect for describing me.

When I was five, Mother told me to 'focus on the road while walking'. Back then, she already knew that I always read while walking.

No, I can't resist the urge to read. Sorry, Mother, I can't listen to you this time.

Mother and Father are both normal people and the education they gave their son was flawless, but unfortunately their son himself is flawed. This is what they call a stupid kid right?

I've lived in Shininaba for a year now and I have to go down this street every day. Even if I closed my eyes and tried to walk home, I wouldn't have to worry about bumping into anyone as not many people went down this road.

I made up my mind and slipped a hand into my bag.

The one I got was 'Hell Zousui', I stared at its bright covers.

Ah, I'll start with you, don't be scared, come here!

I casually muttered a couple of words while I turned over the colourful cover, reading the blurb on the inside cover. I see.....seems interesting. Now, let's begin.

I was just about to jump into the book's world when I suddenly felt something squish under my shoe.

I think I stepped on something——dog poo.

Sorry, Mother, your wise words were right after all. In the future, I won't be reading while walking anymore.

.....Maybe for the next three days at least.

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author]

[Harumi Kazuhito] Bookworm. Born in Tokyo, Area-K, living alone in an apartment of Sumiya Residence in Area-K. His father's name is Kazuki, mother is Rio and his sister, Madoka but they all live in Okayama due to his father's work. His hobby is reading and he specialises in reading. Wears glasses. Virgin. He can find a bookshop within five minutes, even in an unknown place.

[Shininaba Station] Both normal and express trains stop at this station. The next stop is Nobui station.

[Honda Bookshop] A bookshop located within thirty seconds of Shininaba station's southernmost gate. Centuries behind the rest of the world, though no one knows whether the cause is the rapid development of technology or the shopkeeper himself.

[Honda Fumio] Owner of Honda Bookshop. Also born in Tokyo Area-K. Lives together with his wife, Youko and his daughter Sakura and someone else called Yayoi. Hobby is photography, specialises in kneeling techniques. Considerate to others, weak personality, probably has metabolic syndrome and is terrible at owning a business. The Honda family literally lives off what Youko earns from teaching at a local high school.

[Hell Zousui] Hamada Youichi's debut work. Explores the world's spiciest dishes. (Translator's Note: Zousui is a Japanese dish, check it out!)

Going straight home didn't seem such a good idea, so I headed towards the park to wash my shoes.

How should I put it? I felt pretty sorry for myself.

I finally cleaned it up, most of the smell was gone but there were still some faint brown stains. Was rinsing not enough to clean it? I don't know if there's still any soap left.

Oh well, who cares about my shoes, the most important thing is to read now.

I must read all ten books I bought today. More books will be published tomorrow, today's books must be read tomorrow, I must absolutely not delay the reading or else I will violate the seven deadly sins.

I have to go home as soon as possible and concentrate on my reading.

I picked up my book and took off into a sprint, pretending that this was just my reading warm-up.

I finally arrived back at my beloved place, Sumiya Residence.

This apartment, located in a small alleyway, was like my fortress, like my treasure trove.

I looked at the mailboxes, number 101, 102, 103, 105, 201, 202, 203, 205, all of those mailboxes were stuffed with pizza flyers and electricity bills. These electricity bills should have been paid automatically through the Sumiya Residence internet account, but as the housekeeper, I still had to store away a physical copy of each of these bills.

When I was a third year in middle school, because of Father's work, all of my family had to be transferred to Okayama but only I firmly opposed moving.

Father eventually heard my request to stay in Tokyo alone, but he set a condition, that is, to get into that super-difficult, prestigious school in the very centre of Tokyo.

At that time, my grades were average and therefore my parents and my sister assumed that it was impossible for me to get in. However, they were too naive, as I slowly but keenly strode towards my goal despite the many exams.

Though my results weren't exceptionally high, in short, I managed to squeeze into that school. My parents got the results and they just had to let me stay in Tokyo alone.

After that, I began to live with my grandmother's younger brother's daughter's husband's friend's daughter, the most distant relative possible—in Sumiya Residence.

Hmm, there seemed to be something else in 102's letterbox.

It was a postcard, from Madoka.

Flipping it over, it was a photo of her eating dried Udon noodles in front of Kurashiki Station. Madoka had also written 'Kazu-nii, Okayama is a cool place!'

What does that mean? A plot to trick me into going to Okayama? Impossible Madoka, Kazu-nii will never go to Okayama because the books there come out a day later than the ones in Tokyo.

No no no, it's definitely a no.

How could I possibly delay my reading? Even if it's just a day later, it would seriously disrupt my plans. If you could get the new books there to release faster, I might come, but that's something impossible for you to do. Wait until you get older before deciding what to do.

But why was the postcard in 102's letterbox? I live in 101.....that's right, I had forgotten to tell my family about the room change.

During spring this year, my room was about to burst from books, when the original landlord came back to Shininaba.

At once, I begged the landlord 'if you have any spare rooms, could you lend them to me for storing books' and to my surprise, she excitedly replied 'you can have all the rooms if you want'.

Had this landlord hit her head? That was my first impression, until I saw the spare rooms myself, each room was filled with books. She had been using the spare rooms of Sumiya Residence as storage space for books. That's how the colliding sound that I occasionally heard in my room came to be.

Sumiya told the stunned me, "Kazuhito-chan, if you agree to look after these treasures, I'll give you every room, including the 102 room you're currently in. You don't need to pay the rent either."

The proposal was just too good to be true.

Of course I agreed immediately.

That goes without saying!

Sumiya heard my reply, answering "ok! Then you'll be the housekeeper of Sumiya Residence! Dong-Dong-Dong-Ba-Ba-Ba! Woah!" With that, she ran out of the room. I decided that it wouldn't be a good idea if I tried to remind that she was already well past the age of being funny.

Back then I had concentrated all of my energy on my facial muscles, pulling them forcibly into a sweet smile. Anyway, I was to have the entire residence and therefore, this wasn't too much of a sacrifice.

Having said that, why was she wearing cat ears? She wore rabbit ears once too.

I remember that her profession is a lawyer, but can she really pull off debating in court? The plaintiffs, defendants and judges are unlucky enough but Sumiya is even more pitiful. Though I suddenly had a thought that maybe she could be pretty good if she took the defensive side of things.

In conclusion, as the housekeeper, I have to clean all of the rooms and tidy the stacks of books. Tidying these piles of books was not necessarily work, but a hobby. It is just the dream of those who love books, like me.

At that time, I had a thought that I should move to room 101, as it was the largest room and the closest one to the door. I could use all of the rooms anyway.

But I forgot to tell my parents, what should I do.....

No, it's better if I don't tell them. If I told them that the rent was free, maybe they'd send me less money for living expenses. As a result, I would get less money to buy books and what good can come to that!

I don't care if they call me a 'rice worm' or 'eating off family'. Work? What's that? Is it tasty? Even buying books to read was sometimes a waste of time. Father once taught me that one should be spending money with friends, club activities or reference books but I found this very hard to believe.

Listen up, the Earth spins because of books!

Just like that, Sumiya left me this beautiful place, calling out 'the world is still waiting for me!' before running out and to this day, she has never come back.

I really don't understand idiots, but it's not that bad that she hasn't come back yet. Let the sea call her.

This way, one day, this place can be renamed as the Harumi Residence.

When the time comes, I'll be making this the finished plan of mankind.

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author]

[Sumiya Residence] Where Harumi Kazuhito lives in Tokyo. Concrete building, built two decades ago, two floors and one kitchen. Rent approximately forty-five thousand yen a month. Separate bathroom.

[Sumiya Yuiki] The landlord of Sumiya Residence. Born in the Shizuoka Prefecture, current whereabouts unknown. Family members unknown. Hobby is observing others, specialises in getting herself cornered and making a comeback at the last second. Lawyer. Acts like a young girl, wears different animal ears every day.

[Grandmother's younger brother's daughter's husband's friend's daughter] If you think carefully, she's actually a complete stranger.

[Paycheck] At the end of each month, Harumi Kazuhito receives ten thousand yen.

[Finished Plan of Mankind] Unknown to this moment. Check for new updates.

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August 10

At nine fifty-eight, the sky was gray, I went to Honda Bookshop. Occhan always opens the door at exactly ten o'clock, but there was still two minutes left. I thought those two minutes took forever to pass.

Akiyama Shinobu's new book was going to come out today.

Last time it was suspense, what would be the theme this time? Sci-fi? Non-fiction? A thriller? Could it be a sweet romantic comedy?

Ahh! I can't take it anymore!

Akiyama Shinobu was a talented author, my favourite one too. I would always mention that name long before someone actually asked me who my favourite author was.

The date of Akiyama Shinobu's new book's release date had been marked as a major event on my calendar. Luckily it was summer, so I didn't have to school. In fact, even if I did have school, I would have no choice but to have the day off.

To enjoy the fun of this moment, I never read the book's description. I had gotten the release date from Uncle and not knowing what kind of book I was just about to encounter made me bubble with excitement.

The door opened at exactly 10:00. In front of me was Occhan's smiling face and book he was holding.

"Morning, Akiyama Shinobu's new book is here, including tax, that would be a total of one thousand two hundred and fifty yen."

This extraordinary reaction rate.....I told you so, Honda Bookshop really was the best!

Well done! Occhan! That pink apron really suits you today.

Seeing his bruises, I knew that he had punished last night.

The word 'wife' only looks good in text form. When it forms into a human, it is truly terrifying.

Never mind, I took the long-awaited book of Akiyama Shinobu, hands trembling slightly.

"Thank you, thank you! I don't need a receipt!"

I handed him a one-thousand yen note and two one-hundred yen coins, then dropped a fifty-yen coin into his right hand, not forgetting the points card.

Then I turned and ran, the weight of the book feeling comfortable in my hand.

What the hell? It was just like a bento box! I can't believe she wrote such a thick book!

I didn't buy any other books today, hers was enough!

Run, run, run, must get to Bright Sun Cafe.

I've decided to read Akiyama Shinobu's new book at Bright Sun Cafe today.

If anyone tries to stop me, I will thwart them, even if it is the demon king himself!

I finally arrived at Bright Sun Cafe.

I was breathless, but my spirit was stronger than my body as I did not feel tired at all.

I guess this is the greatest excitement a reader can feel?

Bright Sun Cafe was obscure like usual, keeping a low profile in its area. It had a barely visible entry and its interiors were also very plain. The outside was tattered and the inside was shabby, it wasn't a pretty sight.

In addition to the checkout counter, there were six tables, six tablecloths, twelve chairs and several cracks on the windows. A big fan hung from the ceiling and there were some things stuck on the walls, for example, English newspaper.

The old man looking after the shop aimed a quizzical look in my direction, but he was usually so wry-looking that it was hard to believe that he was just a businessman. "Sadou Genji" said his badge, which was worn with age.

The menu on the table, apart from "coffee" and "tomato spaghetti", also had some unusual ones, such as "winding orange juice", "happy yellow coffee", "Italy's march of pasta" etc.

I just said "coffee" and went to my usual spot. There was obviously dirt everywhere and the place felt somewhat dodgy, as if someone sinister would enter sooner or later.

But, that's better.

The restaurant was old and the owner couldn't care less about it, but these little details weren't that important to me— the only thing that's important is the atmosphere. I just need somewhere quiet to read, even if it's in a corner of hell or that the earth is on fire, I won't react unless I finish the book. My surroundings aren't important, the book is everything.

A couple of minutes later, a cup of coffee was delivered to my table...damn, it's disgusting like usual.

It's not that I'm picky; it's just that it tastes like mud sludge and it does nothing else but give me energy. Even though I don't know much about coffee, even I can tell that it's disgusting. Why do so many people drink coffee despite the disgusting taste? Actually, it's one of the Shininaba Seven Mysteries.

Never mind, the main point is reading, food and water should only quench hunger and thirst.

Before reading, I prepared myself. I rolled my head a couple of times, if you don't do this, you won't be as relaxed while reading as you should be. It's a bit exaggerating to say that your body affects your reading, but, it's true that people can read due to having their bodies.

While I was reading, I couldn't help checking out my surroundings.

It was still early, but there were already a couple of customers. There was a man wearing glasses who was typing on a laptop, a long-haired girl who seemed to be writing a report, a frowning middle-aged man drinking coffee... why bother drinking it when it's so disgusting.

Okay, preparation complete, time to read. Now I will melt into the sea of words.

Now reading.

Boy in the middle of reading.

...Some time later.

I stretched and looked up. Out the window, I could see clouds gathering as if it was about to rain. Then I glanced at the clock and realised that it was three-thirty in the afternoon. Already? Time never waits and this always happens when I get immersed in a book.

Books stole the most important thing in my life; my life is now consumed with books.

But, this isn't necessarily a bad thing.

I don't even care if someone stuck a pillar in my brain, as long as I can continue reading.

Maybe that's better as I won't need to do any unnecessary actions.

Maybe it'll be a bit like becoming a book-reading machine.

"Not bad, though it's much different to what I'd imagined."

I took a short rest from my continuous reading.

Akiyama Shinobu's latest novel, The White Butler and the Arab King, was in reality, completely different to what I'd expected. But.

"It's BL....."

I ended up having more questions than I'd expected, but that was a given since I hadn't read the blurb. Akiyama Shinobu had never written something like this one, just what was going on? Entered a new world maybe?

But anyway, this book was really interesting and that is the undeniable reality. Akiyama Shinobu's stories never disappoint me. No matter what genre or style the stories are written in, all of them are masterpieces.

I had already forgotten who I was as the relationship between the butler and the king was really emotional. I could feel my body "reacting" to the story.

Ah, had I just entered a new world?

There are lots of unknown things in the world, but of all the things, she chose Arab. Thank you Arabs, for your expertise.

I casually paid the old man at the till and walked out of Bright Sun Cafe.

Akiyama Shinobu's stories are indeed interesting, even such an unknown topic intrigues me. I learn so much about life and about different people.

Though, I really hadn't imagined it would be BL.....

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author]

[Bright Sun Cafe] When it first opened, it was popular but now there are only a few regular customers. The main, advertised dish of their menu is tomato spaghetti and their disgusting, undrinkable coffee.

[Sadou Genji] Owner of Bright Sun Cafe, born in Kanagawa Area-Y. Wife, Mari, died thirteen years ago and since then, he has been living alone. His hobbies are coffee and watching TV, he specialises in cuisine. He is very quiet and can be mistaken for a butler, but usually not (due to his ugly face). He writes in his diary every night to remember all his customers and what their orders were.

[Shininaba Seven Mysteries] Seven hot topics spread as rumours among Shininaba students. These include 'the pet shop owner's afro expands everyday', 'the invincible cafe', 'high rise buildings that never cool down' etc. etc. All of them lack solid evidence.

[BL] All of these stories describe male x male relationships. These books have always been targeted at female readers, but this seems to have changed.

[The White Butler and the Arab King] Written by Akiyama Shinobu. This story is about a butler who finds out that the enemy country's king, the Arab King, had fainted in the desert. Therefore, he decides to help but the King had already lost his memories. From thereon begins the story of seduction.

Two hours later.

“.....sigh.”

I was back at Bright Sun Cafe and I had already finished two books.

I had returned to Honda Bookshop, where I bought a stack of BL novels.

Occhan was shocked. His face was even more twisted with shame than when I first bought an erotica novel.

Then I came back to Bright Sun Cafe to continue reading these BL novels. To be honest, they were surprisingly interesting. If you could get past shameful parts, it was actually a refreshing experience.

After a while, I looked out the window, the sun was setting soon.

I read many good books today and I will definitely have a good dream tonight, so I'll just read five books before going to sleep. It's healthier to balance my reading out.

It was about time to go, I reached into my pocket. Wasn't there. I groped for my wallet, but I couldn't feel it, my pocket was empty.

I broke into cold sweat.

“Eh ——!”

Can't find it! Had I dropped my wallet somewhere?

“Losing my wallet” was an unexpected nasty surprise.

Fortunately I had bought many BL novels this morning, my wallet hadn't much money.....no, the money is not the most important thing in it. It also had my keys, student ID and the Honda Bookshop points card!

I don't care about my keys as I have a spare and losing my student ID isn't that important either. However, the points card cannot be replaced. I got it from buying so many books from Honda Bookshop, they were a complete record of my daily reading life in Shininaba, and I just cannot lose that thing.

Find it! If not, go to the police station and ask there!

My student ID has my address on it, so if a kind-hearted person picks it up, they will send it to me. Even if a bad person picks it up, I would be very pleased just to get the points card back. I believe bad people have no need for a points card.

Okay, now that my plan is intact, calm down and continue reading.

Therefore, I began reading again.

Another hour passed.

“.....sigh.”

Sure enough, it was very exciting.....wait!

Why did the hell did I start reading again! Suddenly I felt amazing, that I was an extraordinary person, that I could stay so calm in a situation like this. Wallet, I must find my wallet soon!

Can't help it, good books are good no matter how many times you read them.

The decorations were tatty and the menus on the table were dirty. Out of the corner of my eye, a man tugged at an old man, who stood rooted on the spot, eyes wide open. There was nothing unusual and the world was without incident, full of peace.

No no no, wait wait wait.

What with that 'nothing unusual', everything's abnormal here!

Trembling, I took another look at the tatty decorations and the dirty menus. I heard voices around me. "Cut the crap, bring it out!" "Eh! What do you want?" "Hurry!" said the man with the shotgun threateningly, holding onto the confused old man.

What's with this?

I blurted out, using a Kansai accent I rarely use.

That man seemed menacing, his eyes were dangerous but the more I looked on, the more I felt he was no ordinary person. His bloodshot eyes were as red as ripe tomato.....why was that all I could think about?

Must not get too absorbed in this book.

Suddenly someone stared into my eyes.

"HEY!!"

A hoarse voice froze the cafe. You don't need to yell, I can hear you and having said that, who are you? A youkai who has decided to pay a visit to this world? A robber perhaps?

"What the hell are you looking at!"

Then why the hell are you saying that!

However, I was not brave enough to say this humorous response for there was a huge lump in my throat and it felt inappropriate. This was my first time seeing a robber and I couldn't get my mind around that.

"You, get up!!"

The robber scratched his head impatiently and a lot of dandruff fell down from his crew cut. Please, don't come near me.

Eh? Did he just say 'you' as in 'more than one'?

I felt that the atmosphere behind me was not quite right so I turned to look.

There was a girl in black.

.....Who the hell is she?

I suddenly forgot about the robber and could not help but look at her, entranced.

Black. Black, was all I could come up with to describe her.

She was probably the same age as me. Black jacket, black shirt, black vest, black miniskirt, black stockings and black high-heeled shoes. Her black clothes did not have any summer spirit. Her beautiful, wavy black hair went all the way down to her waist and she was a bit like a shadow extending out of the floor, like a woman of the night.

The night-girl had a fierce expression as she focused down at her table and if I still had my wallet, I would have immediately surrendered it. She was good enough to challenge the robber.

Wow! There was another weirdo facing her and the atmosphere was very tense.

Then I suddenly realised that the girl was writing a manuscript for a book.

Scritch-scratch, scritch-scratch, scritch-scratch

The night-girl was focused on her writing, completely unaware of her surroundings.

The groan that left her lips, the sound of her left hand scratching her head, as well as the sound of a pen making contact with paper, continuously echoed around the cafe.

She no longer looked human, but an automatic writing machine.

Her black hair slightly hid her eyes, which were red. The firmness in her eyes seemed to show that even if the world was about to destruct, she would continue writing. My eyes refused to pull away from her powerful yet beautiful appearance.

Writing is something more honourable than most other things.

However, not everyone could understand the profundity of that.

“.....How dare you ignore me.”

The robber approached her, his shotgun pointing at her.

Hey hey hey! What are you doing? What's up with that? That's a gun, are you really going to pull the trigger? No way, you'll kill someone, just what the hell are you doing! That girl is stupid too, for not reacting at all!

In this tense situation, even I was trembling in fear.

However, the night-girl never stopped writing.

Hey stop! Open your eyes and look at reality!

The robber found himself being ignored and his face distorted in anger. His finger closed around the trigger and it seemed that there would be a shot any time soon. Even the slightest

displeasure would influence him to pull it.

However, the night-girl did not respond, she didn't resist nor take any notice, just continued writing. Did she not know how much danger she was in? Or had she chosen to deliberately ignore him? Either way, both of them meant bad news.

I can't take this anymore!!

As if possessed by something, I began to move.

I pounced, rammed the robber from the right, tried to knock him down and reached for his gun. But the robber may have been scared of this sudden movement, as he pulled the trigger. The bullet almost hit the floor but it bounced up and hit the side of my foot instead.

It hurts, so hot, it hurts.

Just what am I doing?

I tried to steal his gun, tried to stop the robber.

The robber's movements were slow, but mine were so slow that they were scary. Damn it! Faster! Move faster!

Spilling the coffee all over the floor made his feet look like it was stained with mud, but I didn't stop attacking. Why the hell would I stop!?

The robber and I began a fight with a series of turning over tables and knocking over chairs. My wound really hurt and it was so terribly hot.

He fired a second bullet, it broke the ceiling fan which made the old man scream. I wanted to scream too, I need peace!

"Bastard, let go!!"

I had no answer nor was I able to answer.

My body suddenly felt pathetic and my muscles ached. My right foot and the hand clinging onto the robber both felt very sore, but I refused to let go. If I did, he'd shoot the night-girl or the old man anyway! I'm not that stupid!

I just want to read, the night-girl just wants to write, there is no need for you so go home! Let books beat you to hell!

I felt a heavy blow on my stomach. As I felt myself being kicked, my body felt as if it were floating and my glasses had disappeared.

Then my head fell onto a table with a heavy thump and my vision began to flash. I rolled onto the floor, the pain killing me. I must stand up quickly or else I will be in more pain.

I opened my eyes, only to find myself looking into a dark cave. That is the cave that leads to Hell, a place to be feared. The muzzle of the gun could now be seen clearly and wow, it was a formidable scene.

".....Goodbye."

The robber's voice sighed as he pulled the trigger and soon after came the sound of the third and last gunshot. My grazed right foot no longer felt sore as that moment, as an incomparable pain flooded through my body, as if I had been hit by a truck.

Vision blurred. Body will not move.

The sound of rain, the coffee aroma, the taste of blood in my mouth and the heat of the shot,

everything had disappeared. It was like the darkness of the night, the silence of a field in snow. The last thing I ever heard was the sound of the gun, not the robber's wretched laughter, nor the sound of my own body bleeding.

Hovering inside my abyss of death, I could only hear the sound of paper and the hard, sharp sound of a pen tip.

What's going on, heart throb.

Looking forward to the nothingness, my heart stopped beating.

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author]

[Shotgun] Benelli M3, designed and manufactured by Italian manufacture Benelli. May be used by the public sector and has internationally renowned quality.

[Heart Throb] Element of surprise.

Inu to Hasami wa Tsukaiyou Volume One Chapter Two

ckmscans.halofight.com/t331-inu-to-hasami-wa-tsukaiyou-volume-one-chapter-two

I was in an unfamiliar place. My vision was filled with colour. No, you could say there wasn't any colour at all. This wasn't something that a human could understand. I fell into this place. Fell from a high place too. There weren't any indications on direction, but I knew that I fell from a high place. I also knew that when my fall ended, everything would be over. Where am I? Why am I like this? My brain was a rocking mess and I couldn't remember a thing. Damn it, stupid brain, hurry up and work!

My eyes suddenly focused on a bright, snow-white world.

Spacious, almost boundless.

It was like infinity, something without end.

It didn't look like something humans understood; it was that unbelievable.

...Oh yeah. "I was shot." Getting shot really was scary. It was forceful and it had scared the hell out of me. That also means.....hey.....not good, I'm too agitated at the moment, so I can't think of any possible answers. Breathe deeply first. The air was very salty as I breathed in. Calm down, I was just at a familiar place, still at Bright Sun Cafe, but now I'm here instead.

I was falling head first and I was utterly naked. I really don't want to admit it. As much as I don't want to, there aren't any other possibilities left. ".....am I dead?" What a remote-sounding question. Not many people would have realised such an obvious thing. Though I hadn't experienced death before, I could still make an accurate judgement based on knowledge and instinct. Stop fretting allowed the calmer side of me to take control. Therefore, I was going through a near-death experience. Which was pretty obvious considering that being shot results in death. I'm not a robot, vampire, pillar man nor the ultimate organism, so of course being shot would result in death.

".....Oh I see, so I'm dead already." After saying that, I felt my body slowly melt away. I knew that I was done for and that death awaited me. This was my ending; there was nothing I could do about it.

Though this happens all of the time in novels, I still panicked when I had actually died. But after holding back these thoughts True, normal people wouldn't be able to experience death. Otherwise they must've died. What a wonderful experience and I was burning to tell someone. Except that I was already dead.

Okay, next is judgement time. Looking back at my life, most of the time, I was happy.

Though a lot of bothersome and painful things happened to me, I had many happy moments. I was pleased with my life; I don't regret anything. But thinking of the people who I had left behind still made me feel quite sad.

Dad and mom. Sorry, your son isn't a good kid. I'm very happy to have once been one of your two children. Though I sometimes found you guys a bit annoying, I'd still like to thank you. I never told you this only because I was too arrogant. Both of you, please live to a ripe old age. If I

ever had a life insurance, use that money.

To Madoka.

Kazu-nii is gone. Sorry, your brother is so useless. The fate of the family lies in your hands and if you can, throw out my old computer. Our parent's haven't got Alzheimer's yet, but if they do, make sure to look after them. Find a good boyfriend soon! I might be a bit overdoing this, but as it's my last world, just be careful and live life to its fullest.

Also, the pets at home...anyway, do your best! I'll cheer for you!

...That's about it really.

I felt pretty awkward.

Although I love to read and often I could feel my own heart connected to the author, suddenly asking me to describe my mood wasn't exactly something easy for me to do.

In this situation, I was unable to think of anything else to say.

Thank you and goodbye.

After saying this, I closed my eyes.

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I was still falling, falling through an endless void.

An unmoving rainbow world enveloped me, like I was watching the scenery of passing life out of a car window.

How long was I going to fall for? In novels, they all say that it ends in a blink of the eye, well, do they really know what happens? What rubbish.

Couldn't help it, as there's time, I might as well read. The best way to forget about the boring atmosphere was to read.

I thought, while I groped for a book...

“.....?”

My hands flailed in the air.

“??”

After making sure several times, my suspicions were confirmed. And then--

“No books!?”

I had only just realized the seriousness of it all.

None! None! None!

I first tried to reach for my pocket, but I hadn't one and even my bag wasn't with me. I was completely naked, so having no books should have been pretty obvious to begin with.

Are there any bookshops here? A second-hand bookshop would do, even a convenience store is okay, but are there any places that sell books? None at all?

Death is such an annoying thing!

Uwah! Having no books made me want to read more than ever! Is there really nothing to read? Really none at all? Advertisements and other stuff is fine, just give me something to read!

...None, there was just the rainbow world around me.

Not a word in sight.

Why didn't I prepare myself for this beforehand!!

Ah, hang on a minute.

No, my brain is a mess. Calm down, think everything through calmly.

Can you not read after death?

My back was soaked with sweat and I felt very uncomfortable.

I wasn't even sure I could feel my body, yes, I felt that uncomfortable.

This was terrible. Can't read, what was going on, was this some nasty joke?

No way no way, that was impossible too.

This was worse than being shot to death.

I really had died, but anything was fine as long as I had books to read.

Masterpieces, rubbish works, bizarre stories, powerful writings, excellent novels to poor pieces of writing.

Geez, I don't want to die without a book in my hands.

What was Death doing! Read my desires! If desires could be read, I want to read it too!

Damn it.

Having no books to read was way more scary than dying.

Realising that I hadn't anything to read made me want to read more than ever.

Akiyama Shinobu's most recent book from "Mortal Sin" series came out last year. Although the last book was promised to come out soon, it still hadn't and the series had yet to be completed. It was a long-running mystery series and it was my favourite as it described the frantic dances of the people and others. How could I die before finishing that series!?

The colours around me started to fade, probably to alert that my judgement time was over.

Go back, go back to the place where I can read.

With that one thought in mind, I started to struggle. Although I couldn't think of any other plan and my current one wasn't working too well, it was still something I had to try.

My heart had lit a firework. Strong, bright and determined.

I wanted to read. All I wanted to do was read.

"No!"

There were still books for me to read, more books for me to read and even more books for me to read.

Therefore, I mustn't die.

"No! No! No! No! No!"

I yelled.

A rumbling yell too.

My throat felt hot.

My body blended into my scream and it was carried far out into the universe.

It was like a song, a curse, something that wouldn't stop screaming and yelling for the world.

"I must go back!!"

I really wanted to go back, back to Sumiya Residence, back to my life of being constantly surrounded by books.

I twisted my body like I was a professional swimmer. I swam and swam.

Fighting the battle of life and death, I struggled to get out of the rainbow world.

"There's still books waiting for me to read!"

I knew that there was no way I could control my body, but the threat of falling gave me energy to struggle. But my mind wasn't clear; I was simply relying on instinct. I want to read, I want to read, was the mantra in my mind and by all means, my only hope in escaping.

The rainbow world was coming to an end as I could now see a gray earth underneath me.

It's likely that life ends there.

And if that's the case, I must, must escape from it.

"It's not over yet..."

There was only one thing in my mind.

"How could I just die?"

And that was as clear as day.

I had to finish Akiyama Shinobu's masterpiece, "sin". I still had to read the final volume, book seven.

I had always hoped to, always believed that one day I would read the best and my favourite book.

In this soulless world, my vision came down to a single item – a book in red covering, a thick and heavy book, a book I wanted to hold onto.

It was fine even if it was just my imagination. As nothing was confirmed, the red book that I had visualised, became my everything. It was working, imagining up a red book was helping me.

The grey earth was approaching rapidly, but I took no notice of it.

"UWAAAAAH!!!"

The scream ripped out of my throat and the sound died around me. I beg you, please return to how everything once was!

The bottom half of my body had sunk into the gray earth by then.

The bright red book disappeared into a gray box of the gray earth.

"What sort of joke is this!!"

I lunged for the bright red book.

My right hand reached out for the box, whereas my chest and left hand had already sunk into the gray earth.

Suddenly, I felt a sharp pain on my right hand and it was really painful too. The pain was unexpected and I had taken my right hand away from the box before I realised it.

Something from inside the box peeked outside.

A dog, a dog bit my hand.

"Eh?"

The next moment, the dog had already leapt out of the box and was studying me carefully.

My mind was bombarded with questions, but it was soon followed by darkness.

Box, book, dog, head, everything sunk. In the end, my raised right hand disappeared into the sea of grayness too.

"Eh?"

In other words,

I had failed miserably.

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author]

[Akiyama Shinobu] Author. Has won countless debut awards. Works are diverse, though all books have a hefty number of pages - all of them are over five hundred pages long. Famous works include the "Mortal Sin" series, "Police Dreams" series and "Street" series.

[Mortal Sin Series] Written by Akiyama Shinobu, widely acclaimed as Akiyama's most 'difficult to digest' series. The covers, storyline and construction capture the readers attention early on. A story about front guards versus powerful beasts. Described to finish in the seventh volume, but ever since the sixth volume was published last year, the series appears to be on hiatus. On the last page of the sixth volume, the main character's corpse appears. About half of the readers vomited when they read this.

[Rainbow World] Unknown as of this moment.

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"Hey, you're still alive right? You're alive right?"

Something hard jabbed into my face.

I still want to sleep, sleep a little longer. What are you doing, don't annoy me. The alarm hasn't rung yet, so let me sleep a little longer.

I turned over, fighting over weakly.

"Oh oh, so you're sleeping huh? That's ok, that's ok, I've finished bandaging you up so you should be fine."

A soft voice from a distant place. I sat up groggily, my vision was blurred and my body felt drained of energy.

What's going on? What am I doing here? My mind slowly began to work again.

I got shot. Died.

Thinking of that, I immediately started to wake up. My body shook violently.

My memory was returning too, first the cafe, next the robber, then the bullet.

I got shot, died, then what?

I still remembered the sensation like burning iron that came with the bullet that hit me. I had clear memories of death.

I glanced around - white ceiling, yellow-green carpet and yellow walls.

Colour.

Am I still alive?

Perhaps I had been resurrected, had already escaped from the rainbow world and was alive.

I didn't remember how this came to be though, as my memory was still foggy.

But one thing was for sure - I was alive.

I cheered happily, for confirmation, and with the new-found energy of a resurrected being.

"I can read now!!!!"

Was that just me? What I just said...it sounded a bit like a dog barking.

Probably just my imagination.

Please let it just be me.

But deep down, I knew what I had unmistakably heard that "yap" of a dog.

The unmistakable sound of a barking dog.

"What's up, Wanko? New-found energy? Good boy, I see that you're terrified of the rain outside. But you sleep for a little longer if you want, to recover your lost energy."

Said a smug-looking guy. What was this afro guy saying? Don't point and peer at me like that, it's disgusting. And, why'd you call me that? I'm not some Wanko, I have a name too, Harumi Kazuhito.

"Eh?"

Afro head walked away. There, through the transparent acrylic door, was a mirror. What was reflected on it was a dog and looked like nothing but a dog.

Damn it, only then did I realise how bad things were.

I lifted my right hand, the dog in the mirror lifted its front right paw.

I lifted my left hand, the dog in the mirror lifted its front left paw.

Uwah, no way. This was bad, this was very bad!

Ah, AH, AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

"I'M A DOOOOOOOOOOG!"

But it sounded like a dog's bark.

My emotional cries had turned into the sounds of a dog.

I didn't get it, was this a dream? Possible.

I continued to wail, hoping it would wake me from my nightmare.

However, the world didn't change.

The sounds I was making weren't that of a human, as all I could hear were the pathetic whimperings of a dog. I wasn't waking up and dreams that can't be woken up from were reality. I was just another dog.

Can someone tell me this, can dogs read?

Give me a book. Anyone who pities me must give me a book!!

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author]

[Dog] Miniature Dachshund puppy. Long black and yellow fur. Body is mainly black, except for patches above its eyes, its chin and the front of its four paws are a yellow-brown colour. Originated in Germany and characterised by its long body and short legs. Originally used to hunt badgers, but now widely welcomed as a domestic pet.

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August 14

Afro first flicks the calendar to the right page then starts cleaning the shop. I was already used to such routines. The world continues to spin without you, whether you want it to or not.

It had already been three days since I first turned into a dog.

Firstly, Afro's name is Imekai Kyoshi.

Secondly, I am dog cage in a pet shop, known as "IGGY", in a shopping district of Shininba.

Thirdly, Afro found me in a cardboard box three days ago. He nursed me back to health when he realised that I was injured.

Lastly, I really was a dog.

What was I going to do? Who wrote such a tragic storyline?

Awakening, resurrection, possession of other beings, returning to the other world.

I had read many books related to those topics, so I knew almost everything there was to know about it; I just hadn't expected something similar would happen to me. 'Reality is often stranger than fiction' really is a great saying. Reality, you never cease to amaze me!

But sometimes, reality is too harsh.

I had to accept reality, as I was a dog from head to toe, and it was undeniable. I wasn't quite sure what people considered to be dog toes, but in short, I had a dog's body.

Perhaps it was because of being left out in the rain, I was very weak and my movements were laboured. Afro would bring me food to eat, so food wasn't a problem. I learned that dog food was very delicious and the soft blankets made lying down really comfortable.

But most importantly, there were books here.

Although I didn't have a book for myself to read, I could still make out what Afro was reading by looking at the mirror reflection. When the shop had no customers, Afro would sit on the couch and read a book. The words in the mirror were inverted, but I couldn't care less. Afro was reading 'Those who Love the Seasons' at the moment, an early short story collection by Akiyama Shinobu. Really, Afro, you have the same interests as me?

What bothered me more than anything however, was that Afro flipped over too slowly. He read one page in the time I could read three.

Come on Afro, you can do it!!

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author]

[Imekai Kyoshi] Owner of a pet shop. Born in Ibaraki Area-M. Lives in apartment with wife in Tokyo Area-E. Hobby is mountain climbing, occupation is pet shop owner. Likes animals but has a weird taste with colour. His afro is sixty centimetres in diameter and said to expand everyday; one of Shininba's Seven Mysteries.

[IGGY] Pet shop. Well known chain stores across the country, selling dogs, cats, birds, monkeys, rabbits and other animals.

[Those who Love the Seasons] Written by Akiyama Shinobu. Describes the four seasons from the perspectives of four different magicians, the winter one being slightly depressing.

A horizontal dashed line with three five-pointed stars positioned along it. The stars are evenly spaced and aligned horizontally.

August 16

Wait, Afro. I get cool air here and I admit it's very comfortable, so thank you, but I can't see the book! Hey, why that proud look? You didn't do anything good, you did some horrible. Though you intentions were good, the result was a big failure!

And I'm the one who suffers because of you! What should I do now, I can't read anymore. I still couldn't control my body, but I could only see the posters and calendars from here. The poster was a picture of cute puppies playing. I don't want to see puppies, you don't heal my pain, transform into a book before appearing in front of me. In other words, there were no words, I could only read the print on the poster and the calendar dates. I couldn't stand it and I really missed reading. Today was the 16th...ah, isn't that when "Blue Red" comes out? Damn it, I really wanted to read. Hey Afro, you get what I mean, hurry up and let me read. I really want to read. Uwah, you're back. Good Afro, you're a decent guy after all. Good good, now give me something to read. No, I didn't want more food!

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author] [Blue Red] Gotou Hikaru's bestseller about a spacecraft 'Blue Red' and their captain, crew as they sail to the ends of the universe. Acclaimed adventure novel. The spacecraft is pink. [Poster] Japan Puppy Society's poster. Has been there since the opening of the best shop. colours have faded.

I can't take this anymore, I want to read.

The hunger for text had given me distorted thoughts and I felt closer to death than death itself.

Ah, the world is turning into paper.

Did my hunger inspire this dream?

It seemed that an interesting story was about to unfold, something impressive.

On my deathbed, my dreams are illusions. I heard footsteps, the sound of brisk footsteps. Expression as bright as the raging fire. Clothing as black as night. Walking alone. Black coat flying open. Even the holster on her thigh glowed silver. Her firm, haughty eyes emitted the light of determination. Moving towards destination.

Completely uninterested in the high-pitched meows of the stray cats, hurriedly dodged the pedestrians and cars braked abruptly. Moving forward swiftly, only interested in target; something important in this ugly yet beautiful world. Speed decreased. Stopped moving. At the end. The desperate end. A promising start. "Sorry for the long wait." In front was a small pet shop. Sign said "IGGY". "The protagonist debuts." Between dream world and reality, I saw it. The silhouette of a person pushing open the shop door. Bright light, distinct silhouette. As beautiful as a genuine protagonist. [picture] My lost consciousness was being pulled back.

I shook my head.

"I-I-I've said this before..." Sharpening sound and the second gate was destroyed.

"This, is not..." Sharpening sound and the third gate was destroyed. "Not a commodity..." Sharpening sound and the fourth gate was destroyed and Afro's determination was shattered. "I understand...please take it away then..." "So, how much is it?" It appeared to look like a normal conversation between shopkeepers and their customers, but the atmosphere was unusually tense. Afro, you did your best, your opposition was the wrong one. "Nothing, as I just said, this dog is not a commodity. I only took him out of the rain. If you don't mind, please adopt him." "...yeah, of course." This conversation may sound very warm, but there was no trace of smile in Scissor-woman's eyes and Afro's face looked like it was about to burst into tears. The other pets in the store had scurried to the back of their cages and my cage was too damaged. It looked more like hell than anything else. The few sentences exchanged between Afro and Scissors-woman had decided my fate. I could not interrupt, just quietly watch from the side. "I don't want to take your things for nothing. Oh yeah, you can give me this cage too, then help me pick out the things dogs need and I'll pay by credit card. Does your shop help transport goods too? My house is nearby, I just don't want to do it myself." "Of course, no problem!" I was obviously involved from start to finish, but they concluded without my opinion. Negotiation successful, Afro ran to select a couple of goods in the store. I watched Scissors-woman out of my battered cage. Close up, I found her looks rather handsome, like some beauty out of a book. It allowed me to forget

about my current situation for a while, as I stared blankly at her. Afro took out the receipt and Scissors-woman put the silver scissors that had damaged my cage back into the red holster on her thigh. She let go of the cage and took the receipt from Afro. Having said that, her scissors and hands were both gone, meaning that the two forces holding up the cage had disappeared.

As expected, the dog cage was pulled to the ground by gravity. "AH!?" "AH!?" The cage fell to the ground and the shock was like being in an elevator when the cable snaps; the impact left me unconscious. My vision darkened, I only saw endless black. Who would let go of both hands at the same time? Is this woman an idiot? Despite my complaints, I was still just a dog.

[The following names, terms, expressions explained by author] [Things Dogs Need] Cage. Toiletries. Food bowl. Water fountain. Toys. Brush. Comb. Dog shampoo. Dog rinse. Dog scratch toys. Ear cleaner. Collar. Lead. Dog food. Total comes to thirty-eight thousand, nine hundred yen. [Gravity] Whether you be dog or president, this is inevitable.
